

**Ohio Senate Education Committee  
Interested Party Testimony  
HB 96 – FY26-27 State Operating Budget  
Testimony to the Ohio Senate Education Subcommittee**

**By Julius Jenkins**

Good afternoon, Chairperson and members of the Education Subcommittee. Thank you for allowing me to speak with you today. My name is Julius Jenkins. I'm 19 years old, a business student at The Ohio State University, and someone whose life has been profoundly shaped by my experiences with the PAST Foundation.

Through their internship program, I first got involved with PAST the summer after my sophomore year of high school. It was the first time I ever worked in a real professional setting. I didn't know what to expect, but I left that summer with something more valuable than just a resume builder. I gained confidence. I learned how to communicate with professionals, work as part of a team, manage my time, and think critically about my goals. These weren't just "extra" skills—they became essential to how I operate today in college and the workplace.

What made the biggest difference was that PAST didn't just treat us like students—they treated us like future professionals. They introduced us to real-world mentors, helped us earn industry-recognized credentials, and showed us how what we were learning connected directly to the future of work. For me, earning those credentials wasn't just about checking a box. It gave me a real sense of momentum and direction. It showed me that I belonged in these spaces and that I could succeed in them.

Now, I've come full circle. I've returned to the PAST Foundation not just as a participant, but as a peer mentor and advisor. I work with students who are just beginning their journey—students who remind me of where I started. Being able to support them, share what I've learned, and watch them grow into confident, capable young professionals is one of the most rewarding experiences I've had. An experience that

was so beneficial, I even got my sibling and cousin, Jaye and Makayla, who were freshmen in high school at the time, to participate and gain the same beneficial skills that I've received to assist them in their success in their futures

This program isn't just about summer jobs or resume lines—it's about preparing Ohio's young people for meaningful careers. It's about giving us the tools, the networks, and the experiences to succeed in a changing workforce. And most importantly, it's about showing us that we have a future worth investing in.

Thank you again, Chairperson and members of the committee, for your time and for considering how programs like the one I went through at PAST can continue to open doors for students across our state.